

Grieving the Spirit

by John Hames

The sermon emphasizes the importance of not grieving the Holy Spirit, who is like a great, sensitive lover who has been sent forth to woo and win our affection and love to Jesus.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23, Proverbs 27:19, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, Hebrews 3:15

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

John Hames preaches about the importance of not grieving the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the need to obey His gentle impressions and allow Him to work in our lives to fulfill God's purpose. He warns against prioritizing gifts over the presence of the Holy Spirit and the dangers of self-indulgence and neglecting spiritual refinement. Hames highlights signs of losing the Spirit, such as a lack of tenderness, spiritual illumination, inward guidance, blunted sensibilities, and diminished discernment, stressing the necessity of maintaining a sensitive conscience and spiritual perception. He concludes by cautioning that continual disobedience can lead to the permanent departure of the Holy Spirit, urging believers to remain faithful to God's leading to avoid spiritual desolation.

Transcript

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."-- Eph. 4:30

The Holy Spirit is like a great, sensitive lover who has been sent forth to woo and win our affection and love to Jesus. Therefore we grieve Him when we fail to obey His gentle impressions and allow Him to accomplish in us and for us the highest possibilities of faith and love. When we fail to let Him refine, polish, enlarge, educate and carry out the great purpose of God in our lives, we wound His love.

Even after we are sanctified and separated from sin, and the Comforter comes to abide, the soul has just entered the school of the Holy Ghost. There are lessons to be learned in the way of discipline and suffering; in shaping and molding us in the heavenly image. Let us not disappoint His great love!

Dr. Daniel Steele says, "The Holy Spirit is grieved when ministers of the Gospel and other Christian workers more earnestly desire His gifts than Himself; when they are more eager to be clothed with His power than to be filled with His presence; when they prefer popularity to purity; when they rely more on polished rhetoric than on the power of the Holy Ghost; when they are more concerned about preparing the sermon than themselves; when they are more ambitious to please the church than the Head of the Church; when they subordinate the ministry of the Lord Jesus to themselves and not to the Lord Jesus;

when they use the sacred office as a ladder to personal fame or gain instead of a stairway up which they may lead repentant sinners to the bosom of God."

The Spirit is grieved when we fail in mastery of the body, and give way to the soft pleadings of the flesh and self-indulgence, and foster and pamper the self-life, allowing the appetites and body passions to lord it over the spiritual nature. The spirit does not leave one suddenly when He is quenched or grieved; but when this is continually repeated, He gradually leaves the soul.

Let us notice some unmistakable signs of the loss of the Spirit:

I. A loss of tenderness. The heart in which the Comforter dwells will be characterized by tenderness, gentleness and kindness. The sarcastic, sharp, cutting words and unkind spirit, which some professors seem to be possessed of, is utterly foreign to the Spirit of Jesus. We mean, by "tenderness of spirit," a "supernatural work throughout the whole spiritual being. It is an exquisite interior fountain of God's own sweetness and tenderness of nature opened up in the inner spirit to such a degree that it completely inundates the soul, overflowing all the mental faculties, and saturating with its sweet waters the manners, expressions, words and tones of the voice; melting the will, softening the judgment, melting the affections, refining the manners, and molding the whole being after the image of Him who was infinitely meek and lowly in heart. It cannot be borrowed or put on for special occasions; it is emphatically supernatural, and must flow out incessantly from the inner fountain of life, and resembles having every atom of our being soaked in sweet oil." (From "Pure Gold.")

Without tenderness of spirit, which is the very soul and marrow of the heart of Jesus, we shall be failures as to soul-winners. We may be straight, orthodox, preach eloquently, be able to explain some wonderful truths, but without tenderness of spirit our message will lack the melting quality, heart-piercing pathos, summer-heat and burning flame of Divine love.

Oh, how many Christian workers started out with the spirit of Jesus, their lives like the leaves from the tree of life, which brought healing to the nations; their messages seemed to drip with unction and glory! But, finally, they grew abusive, harsh, bitter, brow-beating those whose opinions differed from their own. The Spirit was grieved and failed to use them as before. We need to pray fervently over keeping our hearts tender and our spirit an open channel through which the Holy Spirit's Divine life may flow.

II. A loss of spiritual illumination. One of the great attributes of the Holy Ghost is light. It is His mission to so illuminate the mind and all the soul-faculties that God, Christ and Heaven will become a living reality. As the light gradually fades from the west, and darkness comes over the earth, so with the soul that has begun grieving the Spirit; the first conscious loss is that of light. The Bible, which was once an illuminated Book, and which budded like Aaron's rod, with a delightful freshness, becomes a sealed Book. The brightness leaves the countenance, the flash is gone from the eye and the heavenly throb from the heart. We are only saved on the condition: "If we walk in the light."

New light from the Spirit always calls for more sacrifice, self-denial and a deeper conformity to Jesus. We wonder why those whom the Spirit has used for years have run aground and dried up in their experiences, when at one time they made earth and hell tremble when they preached and prayed. If the truth were known, they failed at some point to walk in the light, and refused to take the narrow way. Some whom God has given clear light on Holiness and called to preach it, have cooled off, toned down, and compromised God's truth until they have lost the lightning force from their experience. Let us remember that "light once, is light forever."

III. A loss of inward Divine guidance is an indication that the Spirit is gradually leaving the soul. One of the promises concerning the Comforter is that He will guide us into all truth. There is nothing that is taught any more plainly in the word of God than that upon meeting certain conditions Divine guidance is assured. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Here are the conditions upon which He promises to guide the inward and outward life:

I. That we trust Him with all our heart - that is, without any fear or doubting. We are to rest ourselves, with all of our burdens, finances, past and future, in His hands, and without waiting for feeling or emotion; with a perfect trust we are to step forth by faith and act out what God says.

II. "And lean not to thine own understanding" - neither to past experience, our stored-up knowledge, nor are we to depend entirely upon our "good, common sense." Thousands get out of Divine order by depending on some past victories. There is no such thing as a stored-up experience. God never reveals all of His plans for our lives at once. Therefore, we need the daily Divine guidance of the Holy Ghost.

III. The third condition upon which Divine guidance is promised is "acknowledging God in all our ways," which means putting God first in everything. He must come before business, friends, or our own personal comfort. To acknowledge God in all our ways means that we identify ourselves with His cause, His name, and take His part on all occasions in the presence of friend and foe. Upon these conditions we are promised inward Divine guidance.

There are several ways in which the Lord may guide. He may guide us by directing our minds to some special passage that exactly fits our case, or the Spirit may speak to our inner ear.

The Holy Ghost also guides by making strong impressions upon the mind, suggesting certain things to be done. On the other hand, He guides by checking and holding back from doing certain things; or He may illuminate the mind and gently lead to take a specific course, and in due time will cause the outward providence to work in harmony with the inward leadings of the Spirit. This brings a world of consolation and comfort, to know that our heavenly Father is weaving a network of circumstances to throw around our lives, that in every choice made, in every journey taken, we may have the assurance of inward Divine guidance.

Volumes could be written of how God in all ages has delivered His people from traps and snares laid for them. Who of us has not been suddenly checked from opening our heart-secrets to those who seemed to be our friends, and afterward it was proved why the spirit checked?

Some years ago, one of the holiest men we ever knew told how he was saved from an awful death by obeying the inward voice of the Holy Ghost. He had just closed a meeting, and was to leave at nine o'clock the next morning. He slept until midnight, and was suddenly awakened by the Spirit, who whispered to his inner ear, "Leave this city at once." He did so. The next morning a man who had heard him preach and had become enraged over some statement made, came prepared to shoot him. When told that the preacher had gone, the infuriated man crossed the street and shot to death his best friend, trying thus to satiate his revengeful spirit. Tragic indeed would it have been if that preacher had lost the Divine whisper from his soul and failed to obey the voice of the Holy Ghost. We should be left helpless before friends and enemies.

Again, if we obey his checks and live where we can hear His voice, we shall not only be delivered from men and devils, but all that may be brought to bear against us will come to nought.

Still another sign that the Spirit is being grieved is when the sensibilities become blunted. When the believer is filled with the Spirit, the conscience becomes tender and is sensitive to the approach of sin. But when the Spirit is quenched and grieved the conscience begins to lose its sweet sensitiveness.

According to the Bible and human experience, the conscience can be lulled to sleep, stabbed and choked to death. It is a sad day in one's life when conscience dies and its warning voice is heard no more. Such persons can, with pen and tongue, stab a brother, and, like Joseph's brethren, after having thrust their brother in a pit, sit down to eat with an ease as though nothing

had happened.

Thousands of professed Christians murder unborn offspring, and go right on, seemingly without any pang of conscience. It is alarming to know the things that are done in the name of a good conscience. There is no more sure evidence that the Spirit has been grieved away than for one to have a seared conscience.

IV. Another indication of losing the Spirit is a loss of spiritual discernment.

When the inner man is quickened with all might and power, the spirit knows the things of God by the power of intuition. Like a flash it can detect false doctrine or an evil spirit in a meeting, where a dull, unquickened mind would never suspect anything wrong. There is no limit to the strengthening and developing of the inner senses to discern spiritual truths. An acuteness can be attained that is even more marked than that of the outward senses.

Now, when the sensibilities become blunted and benumbed, the spirit of discernment is lost.

When Israel of old were brought to Kadesh-barnea, and, instead of going over into Canaan, believed the evil reports of the spies, and turned back into the wilderness, there were seven distinct calamities that befell them. One mentioned is the loss of discernment. They could not distinguish a false from a true prophet; a brass censer from a gold one (gold, in the Bible, stands for holiness), nor false fire from true, heavenly fire.

The land today is filled with thousands who once had light and a good experience, but who have turned back and are running after every new fad and doctrine which happens to come along, no matter whether orthodox or not. They endorse almost everything, from unitarianism to come-outism. It has been said of them: "With them everything is all right. They believe in endorsing and rubbing down and patting and smoothing everything that is taught in the name of religion, no matter how false the doctrine and dangerous and misleading the error. Perfect love, with them, is to smile and bubble and gush over every teacher and teaching."

What a calamity it is to lose spiritual discernment, to the extent that one prefers brass to gold; to take up with a false, backslidden religion rather than the true and genuine.

In a loss of old-time power, what can one do after the Spirit is grieved away? It is a piteous sight to see one beating the air, trying to make up with noise for the lack of power and unction. Like a shorn Samson, they shake themselves, but no one else is shaken. There is something hard to describe about the unction of the Holy Ghost. Let one who possesses it begin to speak. At once, there is attention, and soon a

heavenly atmosphere begins to permeate the audience and almost unconsciously people are gripped and held spellbound. It is not the power of an orator or of eloquence, nor the power of learning. We have seen intellectual giants fail, and then some simple messenger put up to speak, and soon the altar would be filled with weeping, praying penitents.

Preaching without the unction and power of the Holy Ghost is like pale moonlight shining on an ice-covered field. There is no light nor warmth in it. Preaching without the power of the spirit may be orthodox, beautiful, eloquent, logical and entertaining, but it is the mere letter that killeth. There is no quickening or Divine life imparted. "When the Holy Ghost floods a person, truth comes like lightning bolts, in short, epigrammatic, positive assertions, with square edges and short points, without studied effort to interweave it with the philosophies and theologies of men. But when spiritual fever begins to cool, the lightning tones down to a tallow candle, the truth is rounded on the edges and decorated with flowers."

Finally, the Spirit can be grieved away forever. Of all deplorable conditions is the one in which the soul is forsaken by the Spirit. For twenty-three years God left King Saul, the first king of Israel. He was forsaken of Heaven during all that time that he reigned over a kingdom and led hosts to battle. Yet he was given up of God and spent his last night on earth with the witch of Endor, trying to get a message through to the spirit world.

Jesus wept over the doomed city of Jerusalem and told the Jews that their house was left unto them desolate. We doubt not right then that the smoke was ascending from their altars in the temple, and the priest was there busy with its worship, having rejected the Lord God of the temple.

There is such a thing as saying "No" to the Holy Ghost one time too many. It is possible to heat a piece of iron and then cool it, repeating this process again and again until the metal scales off and all that is left is dross. Even so, by repeated acts of disobedience one's love is chilled until the heavenly dove leaves to return no more.

Let us go into an eternal covenant with God, to be true to His leading and checks, that He may abide with us forever.

"There is a time, we know not when,

A point we know not where,

That marks the destiny of men

To glory or despair.

"There is a line by us unseen,

That crosses every path,

The hidden boundary between

God's patience and His wrath.

"To pass that limit is to die -

To die as if by stealth;

It does not quench the beaming eye,

Or pale the glow of health.

"The conscience may be still at ease,

The spirit light and gay;

That which is pleasing still may please,

And care be thrust away.

"Oh, where is this mysterious bourne

By which our path is crossed,

Beyond which God Himself hath sworn

That he who goes is lost?

"How far may we go on in sin?

How long will God forbear?

Where does hope end, and where begin

The confines of despair?

"An answer from the skies is sent:

'Ye that from God depart,

While it is called today, repent,

And harden not your heart.'

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